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A COMEDY FARCE,

IN ONE ACT.

"SHE'S FAST ASLEEP."

BY

R. R. ANDREWS, Esq.

AUTHOR OF "SILVERSTONE'S WAGER."

TO WHICH IS ADDED

A DESCRIPTION OF COSTUME, CAST OF CHARACTERS, ENTRANCES AND EXITS, RELATIVE POSITIONS OF THE PERFORMERS ON THE STAGE, AND THE WHOLE OF THE STAGE BUSINESS.

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"SHE'S FAST ASLEEP."

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CHARACTERS.

CREAMER, ...	1st Low Comedy.
JOSEPH, ...	2d Low Comedy.
BERTHA, ...	Soubrette.
MRS. CREAMER, ...	

Plays something over half an hour.

Time, present. Evening.

COSTUMES.

Mr. Creamer. — Blue coat, light pants, and fancy vest, hat, etc.

Joseph. — Livery, 2d dress, black suit.

Bertha. — Smart house dress, apron.

Mrs. Creamer. — Very handsome page's costume, tights, hat with long feather, bright sash, etc.

PROPERTIES.

Dishes, tea-pot for fire, looking-glass over fire-place, property lobster and cold chicken, bottles for Joseph; bottles and keys for Creamer; key in R. 2E door; notes for Creamer.

Knight & Leathe, Printers, 478 Washington St., Boston.

"SHE'S FAST ASLEEP."

SCENE (*no change*). *Drawing room.—Door* C.—*Doors* R. *and* L. *Windows* R. *and* L. *of* C. *door.—Fire-place* R.—*Looking-glass over it.—Kettle on fire.—Table with dishes* R.C.—*Easy chair near it.—Small table* L.C.—*Chairs, etc.*

BERTHA, R.C. MRS. CREAMER, C.

BERTHA.

Never fear me, Mrs. Creamer. I'll not leave the house, — not for a moment, ma'am; and if anyone calls, I'll tell them you are not well, ma'am, that you're fast asleep, ma'am, or abed with a headache.

MRS. CREAMER *nods, and goes out* C. *door.*

There, — she's gone. Master's off for all night, and so missus takes it into her head to go to the fancy dress ball. My eyes! if master heard of it he'd go wild tho', he expressly forbid her to go. It's dreadful risky of her, for he might find out about it. (*Goes to table.*) Well I've got the whole evening to myself, and what's more, there's plenty to eat and drink; but to think of missus going in that costume. Wonder how I'd look in tights. (*Holds dress up a little.*) We housemaids never do get any chances to show off. I'm sure I'd look as fine as missus did. (*Whistle heard.*) Hello! who's that? (JOSEPH, *at* C. *door, looks in.*) My stars! that you, Joe? Come in.

JOSEPH.

Are you alone?

BERTHA.

Of course I am; come in.

JOSEPH, *coming down* C.

Where's your missus?

BERTHA.

O, she's gone to the — she's — she's in her room, fast asleep.

JOSEPH.

Asleep, eh? Fast asleep. Where's the old Cream-pot? Is he asleep too?

BERTHA.

He's gone away to stay all night.

JOSEPH.

Your mistress will hear us if we eat here. (*Helping himself at table.*)

BERTHA.

Never fear her; she sleeps that sound a whole pack of artillery couldn't wake her. Are you off for the whole evening? (*Seeing him eating.*) Hello! what are you doing? Hadn't you better wait till you're asked?

JOSEPH.

Eh? Oh, never mind me. You see, Bertha, master has gone to his club, and that's an all-night job, and I'm free as the air till he gets back.

BERTHA.

So am I, till missus wakes up.

JOSEPH.

Your missus is a fine looking woman. I see her often at the window of that room. (*Points* L.)

BERTHA.

The window in the room over there, you mean. (*Points* R.) That's her chamber.

JOSEPH.

I never see the old man there.

BERTHA.

No, he has a separate room. (*Points* L.)

JOSEPH.

Been a row, eh? Well that sort of thing wouldn't suit me.

BERTHA.

Wouldn't, hey? Why most all the rich people have two rooms.

JOSEPH.

Well, Bertha, when we gets married, you understand there'll be but one sleeping room in my house. And when are we to be married, Bertha?

BERTHA.

O, have patience.

JOSEPH.

That's the way you always put me off. Why haint I had patience, any number of times already, and it don't do no good.

BERTHA.

Well, if you want me, want me real bad, Joe, you can have me just as soon as you're a mind to.

JOSEPH.

That's business; put on your hat, and we'll do it at once.

BERTHA.

Nonsense, I've got to get supper first.

JOSEPH.

Who for?

BERTHA.

Well, you see, Joe, I knew missus was a going — a going to bed early, so I invited my godfather Chafer 'round, so he could get acquainted with you.

JOSEPH.

Thank you, but I'm not particular.

BERTHA.

But he's well off, and he's promised, if I marries a nice young man, to remember and give us something handsome.

JOSEPH.

Well, that's hearty; promised something handsome, eh? Got money, too. I tell you, Bertha, let's invite him to go to the theatre.

BERTHA.

To see the new Pantomine? O, that will be so jolly! But, Joe, you can't go in that dress.

JOSEPH.

Bless you, no. I'll wear master's coat, hat, and gloves, and the old man will think I'm a divinity student.

BERTHA.

Then you'd better be getting ready.

JOSEPH.

I'll go at once; boon jewer. (*Kisses her.*) Boon jewer. (*Exit* C.)

BERTHA.

(*Wiping mouth with sleeve.*) Nasty tobacco juice; he's been smoking or chewing, and's got it all over my mouth. (*Goes to table.*) Now let me see; what shall I get? There's a nice cold chicken down stairs, and Joe's death on cold chicken. I'll go and get it. (*Exit* L. 1E. *Enter* CREAMER C. *cautiously.*)

CREAMER.

(*Looking about.*) No one about; well, come now, that's lucky, for I'll wager a five-pound note that my arrival would rather surprise them. Says I to Mrs. Creamer, "my love, I go to Bath," but I *don't go there*, O, no! 'Twas a sly dodge of mine, a very sly dodge. She little thought that I was to dine with the most charming of widows, relect of the late lamented Crumpeper. Yet such was the case, I'm sorry to say. The fair widow dotes on lobsters and to please and surprise her, I bought this one on my way there. (*Takes lobster out of carpet-sack.*) I paid two shillings for it. (*Puts it on table.*) And started a half hour before the appointed time. On arriving at the house, and accidentally looking in at the first-floor window, I was surprised, I may say astounded, to see seated directly opposite the fair creature a grey

gentleman in goggles. The sight of that simpering, grey-goggled old sinner, struck me with remorse, I may say pain; says I to myself, "Creamer, be virtuous, go home and sup with the future mother of your little Creamers"; I pondered a moment, — naturally, — took the advice, — and the lobster, — and here I am, a virtuous, consequently a happy, man, but Lord! how hungry. (*Sits in easy chair* R.C. *Enter* BERTHA *with a cold chicken* L.)

BERTHA.

Here's the nice, cold chicken, and —— (*Sees* CREAMER.) O, Lord! (*Hides chicken behind her.*)

CREAMER.

(*Looking around.*) Don't be afraid, Bertha, it's only me.

BERTHA.

What, sir, and are you not in Bath?

CREAMER.

In bath, lass? Why, what the devil should I be in bath for?

BERTHA.

Why, sir, missus told me as how you had gone to Bath on very particular business.

CREAMER.

O yes, Bertha, I remember now I did go to Bath, a — that is, I was to go to Bath; but you see I missed the train.

BERTHA.

Go-o-d gracious!!!

CREAMER.

Why, what do you mean by such a good gracious? People may miss a train if they want — I mean if they have to, can't they? Is there anything very surprising in that?

BERTHA.

O no, sir, of course not. (*Seeing lobster.*) You have brought something for your tea, sir?

CREAMER.

Yes, Bertha, a lobster, a nice lobster.

BERTHA.

(*Turning aside.*) O, dear, he'll be asking for his wife in a moment; what shall I say?

CREAMER.

(*Seeing cold chicken* BERTHA *is holding behind her.*) What are you holding behind you, Bertha?

BERTHA.

(*Turning quick.*) O, sir, it is a — a —

CREAMER.

Cold chicken.

BERTHA.

O dear, yes, sir; a cold chicken, for to-morrow's breakfast, sir. I'll go and put it away. (*Goes* L.)

CREAMER.

Not so fast, Bertha; put it on the table, and set plates for two. (*Fixing plates.*)

BERTHA.

For two? Is a friend going to sup with you, sir? (*Sets chicken on table and helps him.*)

CREAMER.

No, I am going to sup with my wife.

BERTHA.

(*Lets plate fall.*) Good gracious!!

CREAMER.

What, another good gracious? Why, Bertha, you don't think I'd sup with any other woman, do you?

BERTHA.

Certainly not, sir.

CREAMER.

You are a very good girl, Bertha.

BERTHA.

Thank you, sir.

CREAMER.

Is Mrs. Creamer in her room?

BERTHA.

In her room, no sir; she's — O, yes — yes, sir, she's in her room; of course she is.

CREAMER.

Very well; (*Getting up.*) I'll go and call her.

BERTHA.

(*Running before him.*) O, sir, O, sir; don't, don't, go in there!

CREAMER.

And why not, pray?

BERTHA.

Because, she's — she's abed, sir.

CREAMER.

Well, what if she is; she's my wife, ain't she?

BERTHA.

Yes, sir, certainly; but she's asleep.

CREAMER.

Well I will wake her.

BERTHA.

But, sir, you mustn't, I beseech you.

CREAMER.

Would you keep a man from seeing his own wife?

BERTHA.

O no, sir, no indeed, sir.

CREAMER.

Then why do you stop me?

BERTHA.

You see, sir, she's got an awful headache, and — and you must sup alone.

CREAMER.

Got a headache?

BERTHA.

O yes, sir, her poor head is almost splitting with pain, awful pain, I assure you, sir.

CREAMER.

Am I to eat my supper alone? (*Goes to table.*)

BERTHA.

Yes, sir, all alone.

CREAMER.

And there's no one to share the lobster with? (*Seating himself at table.*)

BERTHA.

You must eat it yourself, — eat it all up.

CREAMER.

Bertha, go and get me my dressing-gown. It is in my room, on a chair. (*Taking off coat.*)

BERTHA.

(*Aside.*) Good gracious, I dare not leave him alone. (*Aloud.*) Hadn't you better go and get it yourself?

CREAMER.

Did you hear me? Go!

BERTHA.

Yes, yes, sir. Will you stay here by the fire, sir?

CREAMER.

If I so choose.

BERTHA.

But hadn't you better come down in the kitchen?

CREAMER.

No, Bertha, I prefer to stop here.

BERTHA.

But think, sir. If you should make the least noise, you might wake your wife.

CREAMER.

Go as I bid you and get the dressing-gown. Do you hear me?

BERTHA.

(*Aside.*) I dare not refuse. (*Aloud.*) But pray, sir, you'd better not move. I'll be right back; don't move, sir. (*Exit* L.2E.)

CREAMER.

Well, I must say that young woman acts most strangely; why should she seem so flustered. If I'd only kept the appointment with the widow at the stated time, grey-goggles would have been disposed of, and I should have supped with that charming creature, in blissful ignorance of his existence. (*Enter* JOSEPH C. *with two bottles.*) Hello! who have we here?

JOSEPH.

(*Coming down* C.) Hello! here's godfather Chafer. What a jolly old cock! (*Puts wine on table.*) Good evening, Chafer; happy to meet you, my boy.

CREAMER.

O you are. Well, sir, let me ask, "Who are you, sir, and what the devil do you want"?

JOSEPH.

(*Going to him, patting him on shoulder mysteriously.*) Hush! It's all right. Don't say a word. Keep mum, you understand. It's all right.

CREAMER.

Well, do you know I'm glad to know that, for to me it looks all wrong.

JOSEPH.

It's quite right, I assure you. I like your appearance. How do you like mine? (*Turning round.*) Tidy, ain't it? You see, sir, we both expected you.

CREAMER.

The devil you did! Then I *was* expected.

JOSEPH.

O yes, we expected you, for you know the old buffer has gone to Bath.

CREAMER.

Eh! Old buffer! old buffer!! what old buffer?

JOSEPH.

Why, her husband, don't you understand?

CREAMER.

(*Aside*) Creamer, be calm, be calm. (*Aloud.*) Her husband; O yes. So the husband of the lady is away, and you have been invited here *in his absence* on a kind of a little—little—you know.

JOSEPH.

That's it exactly. She has the kind of a little, you know, while the husband is away. Cute in her, isn't it?

CREAMER.

O yes, O yes, very. (*Aside.*) And so, my fine lady, because I forbid you to go to the ball, you receive your gentlemen friends here in my absence. O you viper! To think of her supping with this ape.

JOSEPH.

You're a jolly old cock; I like you, After supper's over we are all going to the theatre, and after that we may have a dance; that's good, eh?

CREAMER.

O yes, that's very good. (*Aside.*) Creamer be calm.

JOSEPH.

Yes, I thought you'd like it. (*Opening bottle.*)

CREAMER.

Did you. Well, that's kind of you. (*Aside.*) My wife go to the theatre and to the ball without me? O, this is too much. And stay, that explains Bertha's anxiety; that explains the cold chicken. The girl is an accomplice.

JOSEPH.

You see, she and I arranged it all only a little while ago; she's getting ready now.

CREAMER.

She is, hey?

JOSEPH.

Yes. 'Pon my soul, old fellow, I rather like you; didn't think I should. We'll be two jolly good fellows, eh? (*Taps him on stomach.*)

CREAMER.

(*Grinding his teeth.*) O, thou devil!

JOSEPH.

Between you and I, the poor thing don't often get a chance like this; husbands don't go away every day, you know.

CREAMER.

This is too much! (*Collaring him.*) I've got you, have I? (*Shaking him.*)

JOSEPH.

(*Surprised.*) Hello! what do you mean Chafer? What's your game?

CREAMER.

You scoundrel, I'll teach you a lesson worth two of that; take that (*a shake*), and that (*a shake*), and that—

JOSEPH.

Murder! you're strangling me. He's mad! Chafer's mad! Murder! somebody! help! (*Enter* BERTHA, *with dressing-gown*, R.2E.)

CREAMER.

You ill-visaged rascal, you come to my house in my absence, do you?

BERTHA.

O Lord! he'll kill Joseph.

JOSEPH.

Take your hands from off my throat.

BERTHA.

Master, master, he means no harm.

CREAMER.

No harm indeed! (*Shaking him.*)

BERTHA.

O master, don't kill him, he's only my intended, and only came to take supper with me.

CREAMER.

What, supper with you? Didn't he come after my wife, eh?

BERTHA.

O no, indeed, sir, he's a very respectable young man, sir, very. Servant to the French gentleman, opposite.

CREAMER.

(*Letting him go.*) A servant in such a coat as that, and with a real gossamer, too.

JOSEPH.

(*Humbled.*) O, sir, they belong to my master; he's away, sir.

BERTHA.

You see, sir, you being away for the night, why, I invited him here, and we were going out on a bit of a time, sir.

CREAMER.

I see it, I see it all now.

JOSEPH.

(*Aside to* BERTHA.) Ain't he your godfather?

BERTHA.

No, indeed; he's my master, Mr. Creamer.

JOSEPH.

O Lord! O Lord! (*Aloud to* CREAMER.) O, sir, I humbly begs pardon, sir. If I'd only have known, sir, that you were —

CREAMER.

The old buffer, eh? (*Walking* R. *and* L.)

BERTHA.

You see, master, its all a mistake.

JOSEPH.

All a mistake, sir.

CREAMER.

Go, go and leave me. (*Aside.*) To suspect for a moment, that poor innocent, sleeping in yonder room, perhaps at this moment dreaming of the absent Christopher. O, it was too much, too much. (*Aloud.*) Go, I say. Go, and leave my sight.

JOSEPH.

All right, sir, going.

BERTHA.

(*To* JOSEPH.) Wait at the door and tell my godfather to go home.

JOSEPH.

I will, Bertha. To think of calling the old buffer, an old buffer, and to his very face, too; ha, ha, ha. (*Exit* C.)

BERTHA.

Master, here's your dressing-gown. Shall I help you on with it?

CREAMER.

To doubt — to doubt her. I, the guilty one who should suffer. Will she pardon her Creamer, if her Creamer humbled himself in the dust at her feet? Yes, yes, Creamer, she would, I'm sure she would. Then go, Creamer, go. (*Goes* R.2E.)

BERTHA.

(*Runs before him.*) Master! Master! Where are you going?

CREAMER.

Into my wife's room, my good Bertha.

BERTHA.

Into her room? Oh, no, you must not; she is not well, sir.

CREAMER.

Don't stop me, Bertha! Don't stay a penitent Creamer; he will feel better, much better.

BERTHA.

But think, master, she is so weak and nervous, it would startle her; she's dreadfully ill, sir.

CREAMER.

Poor, innocent darling; she shall not be startled. (*Coming down* C. *taking off coat.*) Help me on with my dressing-gown, Bertha. (*She helps him.*) There, that's comfortable. Now move the chair up by the fire. (*She moves it.*) There, this is home-like. (*Seats himself.*) Good-night, my child. I can get along without you; good-night, go to bed.

BERTHA.

What! go to bed?

CREAMER.

Yes; go to bed, child.

BERTHA.

O, sir, but I'm not a bit sleepy. (*Aside.*) Go to bed and leave him here? Not if I know it.

CREAMER.

(*Eating fast.*) But I shan't want you; I can help myself now —

BERTHA.

(*Aside.*) Gracious, he's going to eat up all our supper. I'll stop that. (*Aloud.*) H'm, H'm! Mr. Creamer, O, sir.

CREAMER.

(*Mouthful.*) Well, Bertha?

BERTHA.

Are you going to eat all the chicken, sir?

CREAMER.

Yes, Bertha, I'm hungry; the chicken and the lobster too.

BERTHA.

But, sir, perhaps it may not be — may not be —

CREAMER.

What, not fresh? (*Sticks his fork into the chicken, and snuffs at it.*)

BERTHA.

O, it's fresh, very fresh, but —

CREAMER.

(*Holding chicken up on fork.*) But — but what?

BERTHA.

I was thinking that, and lobster together, sir, might hurt you. You remember poor, dear Mr. Craggs.

CREAMER.

What! Craggs of the next street? The late Craggs?

BERTHA.

Yes, master; he died in two hours.

CREAMER.

Yes, of colic, I believe.

BERTHA.

Colic and apoplexy.

CREAMER.

(*Eating fast.*) Well, what of it? (*Mouthful.*)

BERTHA.

Well, sir, two hours before he was taken, he was a well man; but he ate chicken and lobster; 'twas in the evening, sir, and only think of it, sir, in two hours he died in the most terrible agony.

CREAMER.

(*Frightened; spits food into the fire; looks up.*) Chicken and lobster! Why, Bertha, that's what I'm eating. Died in terrible agony? O Lord!

BERTHA.

Yes, indeed, sir, and he was a stout man, rather; just like you.

CREAMER.

But consider, Bertha, Craggs was a natural hog.

BERTHA.

(*Moving table away to* R.C.) But one ought not to eat just before going to bed.

CREAMER.

But, Bertha, I am awful hungry.

BERTHA.

You had better be hungry than sick.

CREAMER.

So I had, Bertha, and it's getting late. (*Yawns.*) A-r-r-h! it's getting late, Bertha.

BERTHA.

Yes, sir, and you'd be better off in bed.

CREAMER.

So I would, Bertha, so I would. (*Goes* L.) Good-night, child, good-night.

BERTHA.

(*Aside.*) He's going at last, thank heaven.

CREAMER.

(*Turning.*) I'll just look in and see if the dear thing is comfortable. (*Goes* R.)

BERTHA.

(*Running before him.*) What, sir?

CREAMER.

Only to kiss my wife good-night. I'll not wake her, Bertha. (*Hand on knob.*)

BERTHA.

(*Aside.*) O, Lord! what shall I do? (*Aloud.*) Master! Stop!

CREAMER.

(*Turning.*) Stop! Why, what's the matter?

BERTHA.

(*Aside.*) O, what shall I say? O, I know. (*Aloud.*) Master, dear master, your face!

CREAMER.

Well, what the devil's the matter with my face?

BERTHA.

Don't you feel bad? Your face is scarlet; you've got it.

CREAMER.

Got it; got what? It's only my natural color.

BERTHA.

O, sir, O my dear master. It's the supper; you are going to have the colic, and apoplexy! You are going to die in two hours! O, Lord! Quick, look in the glass!

CREAMER.

What! (*Runs to glass over fire* R.)

BERTHA.

See! See! Don't you see how red your face is growing?

CREAMER.

(*Frightened.*) Yes, yes, Bertha, I — I believe I do, —

BERTHA.

And your eyes; how strange and wild they look.

CREAMER.

Yes, Bertha, they do indeed look strange and wild.

BERTHA.

And, master, you're all of a tremble.

CREAMER.

Yes, yes, Bertha, now that you mention it, I notice I am all of a tremble. What is it, Bertha, what is it?

BERTHA.

The first stage of colic, master! Rush of blood at the head.

CREAMER.

Good Lord, Bertha, you don't say so! What, — what am I to do?

BERTHA.

Quick, take my advice. (*Goes to fire and gets kettle*, R.)

CREAMER.

But how the devil am I to take your advice? Why don't you give me some?

BERTHA.

(*Bringing kettle.*) Your feet in hot water!

CREAMER.

But where's the hot water?

BERTHA.

(*Giving him kettle.*) Here it is.

CREAMER.

(*Taking it.*) O, ah! (*Changing it from one hand to the other.*) O Lord, I'm burnt, I'm scalded.

BERTHA.

It will do you good, help to draw the blood from the head.

CREAMER.

O Creamer, Creamer, this is anything but supping with a pretty widow. It is certainly a judgment.

BERTHA.

Quick, master, the bath, before you are taken with the colic.

CREAMER.

Ah, me, unfortunate Creamer that I am, unfortunate Creamer. (*Exit* L.)

BERTHA.

There! I've got him out of the way. But missus had an escape that time, sure enough.

BERTHA.

(*Enter* JOSEPH, C.) What! you back again? Did you send my god-father off?

JOSEPH.

Yes; I told him of my taking the old Cream-pot for him, and 'twould have done you a world of good to have heard the old 'un roar. But, I say, Bertha, where's Creamer?

BERTHA.

(*Laughing.*) Ha, ha! Up to his knees in hot water. Taking a hot bath, ha, ha!

JOSEPH.

Well, I don't see anything so jolly in that.

BERTHA.

Of course you don't, ha, ha, ha! Never mind; you can go home now.

JOSEPH.

Eh! What!!

BERTHA.

Didn't you hear me? I said you could go home now.

JOSEPH.

You send me away?

BERTHA.

To be sure I do. Ain't master got home?

JOSEPH.

Well, what of it?

BERTHA.

I don't want you about when he's around.

JOSEPH.

Oh, ho! you don't, eh?

BERTHA.

No, I don't.

JOSEPH.

What's he taking a bath for?

BERTHA.

Never you mind, but go home.

JOSEPH.

No, I'm blessed if I do.

CREAMER, *outside* L.

Oh, ah! Ah! The devil! Oh-r-r — Oh!

BERTHA.

You must! Go quick; master's scalded himself.

CREAMER, *outside* L.

O-o-o-o-h! Ah! To the devil with your hot bath. My poor shins. Oh, Bertha, Bertha! Come, come quick.

JOSEPH.

(*Seeing* BERTHA *start.*) What! You go in his room?

BERTHA.

Go home, you fool! Hush! master's coming, — go quick! (*Pushing him out* C.)

JOSEPH.

But can't we go down in the kitchen?

BERTHA.

No; I must stay here. I have a reason.

JOSEPH.

A reason, eh? (*Aside.*) And I'll find out what it is. (*Goes out* C.)

BERTHA.

(*Shutting* C. *door.*) There, I've got rid of him. Now for master. (*Going* L.)

JOSEPH, *looking in* C. *door.*

There's some mystery here, and I'll know what it is.

CREAMER, *outside* L.

Bertha, Bertha! I'm scalded!

BERTHA.

(*Laughing.*) Yes, master, I'm coming. (*Enter* CREAMER L. *stocking feet.*) Can I do anything for you, master?

CREAMER.

No, you can't. The skin's off both my legs. The water was boiling hot.

BERTHA.

Poor master! (*Laughing aside.*)

CREAMER.

(*Looking at her.*) What you laughing at?

BERTHA.

Laughing, master? I ain't laughing.

CREAMER.

No; you ain't now, but you was. Why, you ought to see my legs. They're all parboiled.

BERTHA.

Yes, but it's cured you. You look much better.

CREAMER.

O, do I? Cured me, eh? Why, damme, it's most killed me. (*Seating himself at table*, R. C.) And now I'll have my supper, colic or no colic. (*Eats.*)

BERTHA.

(*Aside.*) It's no use; I can't save it.

CREAMER.

Bertha!

BERTHA.

Yes, master.

CREAMER.

Is Mrs. Creamer still sleeping?

BERTHA.

Yes, master, fast asleep.

CREAMER.

Go and wake her.

BERTHA.

Eh! Oh, no, master; I couldn't; indeed I couldn't.

CREAMER.

Well, if you can't, I can. (*Getting up.*)

BERTHA.

O master, what are you about to do?

CREAMER.

About to do? Why I'm going to wake my wife.

BERTHA.

But, — master!

CREAMER.

I'll not startle her, Bertha.

BERTHA.

But you must not, sir; indeed you must not. (*Gets before him.*)

CREAMER.

Bertha; what means this mysterious conduct?

BERTHA.

Master, — I — I —

CREAMER.

Well! Why this emotion?

BERTHA.

Master, I — I — there is — there is — a —

CREAMER.

Yes — there is a — what?

BERTHA.

(*Aside.*) What shall I say?

CREAMER.

Well, what?

BERTHA.

Master, master! I'm — I'm jealous!

CREAMER.

(*Starting back.*) Jealous!! (JOSEPH *looks in door* C.)

BERTHA.

Yes, master, dear master. (*Looking down.*) Why not sup with me. I'm lively — I'm good company. (*Playing with her apron.*)

JOSEPH.

(*Aside* C.) Hello!

CREAMER.

(*Aside.*) O what a dog I am with the petticoats. They can't withstand me. (*Regarding* BERTHA.) She's pretty, very pretty; but shall I, for a moment, forget that I am a husband? No, never! (*Aloud.*) No, no, my pretty one. It would be very nice, I dare say, but I must sup with Mrs. Creamer. (*Going* R.)

BERTHA.

But master, dear master.

CREAMER.

Creamer, be firm, do your duty. (*Regarding* BERTHA.) But, 'pon my soul, she's pretty. I never noticed it before; but she's a nice form, and as plump as a peach. (*Takes her hand.*) Two bright eyes, too.

BERTHA.

Dear master!

CREAMER.

But, my dear, consider. Angels have fallen. I am but human; don't tempt a susceptible Creamer. (*Aside.*) Her hand is very soft. (*Stroking her hair.*) Pretty little head, that's soft, too.

BERTHA.

(*Aside.*) O, Lord! This is horrid. (*Making face.*)

CREAMER.

Poor thing; she loves and suffers; for jealousy gnaws the heart as a wharf-rat gnaws corn, to the core. Come, little one, cheer up; calm yourself.

BERTHA.

Yes, master, — I'll — I'll try.

CREAMER.

I am not without a heart.

BERTHA.

No — no — no, master.

CREAMER.

(*Aside.*) She's very fascinating (*kissing her hand. Aloud.*) There, Bertha, you have conquered. You shall sup with me.

BERTHA.

But, mistress, she is so near, Mr. Creamer.

CREAMER.

Call me, Christopher.

BERTHA.

What would she say, Christopher?

CREAMER.

But she's fast asleep, is'nt she?

BERTHA.

O, yes, she's fast asleep.

CREAMER.

And the key is on the outside. I'll lock her in. (*Goes to door, turns key,* R.2E., *and comes down* R.C.) There, we won't be surprised, at any rate. And now for our supper. (*Leading* BERTHA *to table.*)

BERTHA.

But, sir, I'd — I'd — rather — (JOSEPH *looks in* C.)

CREAMER.

Nonsense! Sit down (*leading her to a seat*), there. Now, my dear, we'll be as merry as any two souls could wish. (*Pouring out wine.*) Have a little wine?

BERTHA.

(*Aside.*) 'Tis to save mistress.

JOSEPH.

(*Aside.*) The old scoundrel, he's drinking up my wine. (*Comes in, stands back.*)

CREAMER.

Drink, drink pretty one; here's your good health.

BERTHA.

And your's master. (*Both drink.*)

JOSEPH.

(*Aside.*) And this was her little game, was it?

CREAMER.

And now, charmer—

"I'll be a bee, and honey sip,
From off each pouting, rosy lip."

(*Kisses her.*) There (*she cries out*), and another (*kisses her again*), and again. (JOSEPH *comes down* C.)

JOSEPH.

Never! Defend yourself, old buffer (*strike attitude*), for I'm going clear through you.

BERTHA.

Heavens! Joseph here?

CREAMER.

The servant! The devil!!

JOSEPH.

(*To* BERTHA.) O, this is very pretty, and very proper, I suppose. You send me away "'cause master's got home." You liked this old buffer the best.

CREAMER.

Old buffer! Old buffer! Servant, hold your tongue.

JOSEPH.

I'll not hold my tongue, sir. I am a servant, but I am a man, and I'll say my say, you curly-headed old bigamist.

CREAMER.

Curly-headed what?

BERTHA.

O Joseph, how can you?

JOSEPH.

(*To* BERTHA). I mean what I say, you hypocrite, you. I've been watching you both. I saw him kiss you, and you seemed to like it.

CREAMER.

Watching, you rascal! You watching us?

JOSEPH.

Yes, sir; watching you both, and a fine story I have for Mrs. Creamer's ear.

CREAMER.

Mrs. Creamer! The devil!!

JOSEPH.

She shall know all.

BERTHA.

(*Aside.*) I must hesitate no longer. I must tell Joseph all. (*To* Mr. CREAMER.) Master! Master, let me try and pacify him.

CREAMER.

Pacify him! You! Can you keep his tongue still?

BERTHA.

Let me try.

CREAMER.

(*Giving bank notes.*) I will, Bertha, I will. Here, take this; buy his silence.

BERTHA.

(*Taking money.*) O, sir; all that?

CREAMER.

Take it, take it! Only silence the puppy.

JOSEPH.

(*Regarding them.*) As I thought, he pays her; gives her money. (*Walks up and down* L.)

BERTHA.

(*Aside, going* C.) Ten pounds!! Well, I'll keep this to pay me for the trouble I've been to. (*Puts money in pocket.*)

JOSEPH.

(*Regarding her.*) The brazen-faced hussy. (*Excited.*)

CREAMER.

(*Aside.*) This costs me a pretty penny. A ten-pound note. O, Creamer, Creamer.

BERTHA.

(*Following* JOSEPH *up.*) Joseph! Joseph!

JOSEPH.

Away! away! I want no more of you. Away, fair and false! Get out!

CREAMER.

Hush! hush! Silence the fool! He'll wake my wife. (*Listens at door,* R.2E.)

BERTHA.

Don't make so much noise, Joseph. Listen to me. I'm only playing a part; it is all pretended to save his wife.

JOSEPH.

(*Stopping.*) What?

BERTHA.

Only a pretence. His wife, my missus, is off to the masked ball. He'd kill her if he knew it. My acting so is all a sham to save missus.

JOSEPH.

All a sham, honest?

BERTHA.

Only a sham. I hate the old fool! It's all to save missus; hush!

JOSEPH.

And was it for this?

BERTHA.

Yes, hush!

CREAMER.

(*At door* R.2.E.) She sleeps as calmly as a babe; fast asleep. (*Looking over to* BERTHA *and* JOSEPH.) Hello! I do believe she's calmed the servant. (*Aloud.*) Have you calmed him, Bertha?

BERTHA.

Perfectly, master.

CREAMER.

She's a witch. How these petticoats can get it over us. (*To* JOSEPH.) Are you satisfied, servant?

JOSEPH.

Quite satisfied, sir. Mum's the word.

CREAMER.

(*Aside.*) Now, how the devil did she do it? (*Aloud.*) Mum's the word, and now servant, begone!

JOSEPH.

I will sir. (*Aside to* BERTHA.) She's gone to the ball, dressed in tights, eh? Lord, that's too good.

BERTHA.

Hush! yes, I know he'd kill her.

JOSEPH.

Poor devil!

CREAMER.

(*Aside.*) What are they talking about, I wonder. They seem very much interested. (*Aloud.*) Ahem! Servant, begone! Do you hear me?

JOSEPH.

All right, sir. (*Aside to* BERTHA.) Look out for him. Keep your eyes open. (*Exit* C., *leaving door wide open.*)

CREAMER.

We're well rid of him, Bertha.

BERTHA.

Yes, master.

CREAMER.

(*Sneezing.*) A-shoo-o-o! There, he's left the door wide open. A-a-shoo-o! Shut the door, Bertha, a-a-shoo-o-o!! I catch cold very easy. (*Standing front and attending nose with handkerchief.* BERTHA *goes towards door as* Mrs. CREAMER *comes in.*)

BERTHA.

(*Seeing* Mrs. CREAMER.) O, Lord! (*Runs up to her and points to* CREAMER.) It's master, Mr. Creamer.

CREAMER.

A-sho-oo-o! A-sho-oo-oo!

BERTHA.

He thinks you are in bed, fast asleep; don't say nothing ma'am; he's locked you in; never mind what for, ma'am, and he's got the key to your room, but I'll get it, ma'am. Go back, quick, hush! (Mrs. CREAMER *goes out and* BERTHA *comes down* C.)

CREAMER.

A-sho-o-a! Why, bless me, what a cold I've caught, to be sure.

BERTHA.

(*Aside.*) And how shall I get the key?

CREAMER.

(*Putting handkerchief up. Seeing* BERTHA.) Ah, Bertha! We are alone again. And now, pretty one, let us finish our supper. Come, give me that kiss.

BERTHA.

(*Resisting.*) No! Hush! I — I heard missus; she's awake.

CREAMER.

(*Going to* R.2E. *Listening.*) No, Bertha, she sleeps as quiet as a babe; there's no sound.

BERTHA.

(*Aside.*) Good gracious! how shall I get the key to missus' room.

CREAMER.

(*Coming to* BERTHA.) Come, charmer, to supper. (*Leads her to table.*)

BERTHA.

(*Lost in thought.*) Ah! I have it. (*Aloud.*) Master! Master! I faint! I die!. (*Holds handkerchief to face.*) O, Lord! O, Lord!

CREAMER.

(*Starting.*) Eh! what! Are you sick? What's the matter?

BERTHA.

(*Sinking into chair.*) O, dear! ah! (*As if in pain.*) O, my — ah! —

CREAMER.

Eh? What is it?

BERTHA.

O, my head! O, ah! O dear me, ah!

CREAMER.

What the devil's the matter with your head? Do *you* want a hot bath?

BERTHA.

Mercy, no! Ah, oh. My nose is going to bleed. O, it's awful! It always comes on in this way. O, dear.

CREAMER.

What, O, what can I do?

BERTHA.

Go to the almanac, in the table drawer, fifth page, second column, half way down.

CREAMER.

Almanac! Table drawer! (*Gets it from table, turns over leaves. Reads.*) "Nose-bleed," "A certain cure," "Get a key; hold it on the small of the back for a few minutes, and it will cure the worst case of bleeding at the nose, at once."

BERTHA.

O dear, ah-a-a! A key, a key! O, why don't you get me a key? Don't you see me suffering? Go! Go!!

CREAMER.

O, Lord! O, Lord! Was ever a man in such a fix? I have no key. (*Looking over pockets.*) Stop; yes, here's one, the key to my wife's room. Let me put it on the small of your back, Bertha.

BERTHA.

(*Starting up.*) Sir!!

CREAMER.

Very well; you can put it on yourself, then. (*Gives key.*)

BERTHA.

Yes, I think I shall. (*Aside, pretending to put it down her back.*) Now, how shall I get rid of him?

CREAMER.

(*Watching her.*) Well, does it help you?

BERTHA.

No, not yet.

CREAMER.

Well, it's rather queer physic.

BERTHA.

(*Aside.*) I must send him after something. (*Aloud.*) O, gracious! Oh-r! Oh! Ah-r-r-r, Oh! What shall I do? What shall I do?

CREAMER.

Now how the devil should I know? Do you take me for a medical man? O, Lord! O, Lord, what shall I do?

BERTHA.

Run, run quick for the ammonia. Quick, the ammonia. (*Screech.*) Ah-r!

CREAMER.

"Ammonia," "quick,"—well, where in thunder is the ammonia? (*Running about.*) Where is it?

BERTHA.

In your chamber, in a bottle. O, dear! (*Another screech.*) Ah-r-r-r!!

CREAMER.

In my chamber, in a bottle? Why, bless your soul, there's forty bottles.

BERTHA.

Well, hunt for it, can't you?

CREAMER.

Hunt for it; why, bless me, there's rat poisons, one breath of which is deadly, to say nothing of bed-bug exterminators and roach powders. There, there, calm yourself. I will see if I can find it. This is certainly a judgment on you, Creamer. Be calm, Bertha; I'll return as soon as the forty bottles will let me. (*Exit* L.)

BERTHA.

(*Jumping up.*) There, I've got rid of him better than I expected to. Now for missus. (*Goes to door* C.) Come in quick. (*Enter* Mrs. CREAMER C.) Don't say a word. Master missed the train, and has been home all the evening. He thinks you are sleeping in your room.

CREAMER.

(*Outside.*) O, Lord! That's assafœtida, phew!

BERTHA.

Quick, that's him, ha, ha, ha! (*Going to door 2d* R. *turns key, opening door.*) There, ma'am, go in quick; go to bed, and he'll never be any the wiser for it. (BERTHA *pushes her in, shuts and locks door.*) There, she's safe. Now for master. (*Dancing around the room.*) Tra la la, etc. (*Enter* CREAMER L. *with large bunch of keys and a very large bottle.*)

CREAMER.

(*Seeing her dancing.*) Why, bless my stars, she dances.

BERTHA.

(*Seeing* CREAMER.) O, Lord! ha, ha, ha! What a bottle! ha, ha, ha! (*Laughing wildly.*)

CREAMER.

She not only dances, but she laughs. (*Aloud.*) Bertha, what does this mean?

BERTHA.

(*Seating herself.*) Master, I'm in hysterics. (*Laughing heartily.*) I'm in hysterics, master.

CREAMER.

Hysterics, eh? Why, damme, it seems devilish natural. (*Holding a bottle to her.*) Here take a smell of this; not too hard, for it nearly knocked me down, and I only breathed it. Where's your pain now?

BERTHA.

I don't know. (*Smelling at bottle.*)

CREAMER.

(*Shows keys.*) You'd better lay these on your spine. A large dose may cure you.

BERTHA.

No, no; give me more ammonia.

CREAMER.

Help yourself, take in all you want.

BERTHA.

(*Smelling.*) Ah! it's good. It makes me feel much better, much better.

CREAMER.

Better, Bertha, you feel better?

BERTHA.

(*Getting up.*) Yes, I am not dizzy. I am quite well again.

CREAMER.

Well again, Bertha, all well again? (*Putting bottle and keys away.*) Then I shall have you once again, and we will sup together. See, I put my arm about your little waist and kiss your rosy posy lips. (*Kisses her.*)

BERTHA.

And I will smack your ugly chops. (*Slaps his face.*) How dare you sir, how dare you?

CREAMER.

(*Surprised.*) Bless me, Bertha, what does this mean?

BERTHA.

What does it mean? (*Chasing him.*) I'll let you know what it means. How dare you hug and kiss me, when your wife is there in that room.

CREAMER.

Of course she's there, I know that. (*Noise heard* R.2E.) Hello! That's in her room, she's awake!

BERTHA.

Yes, Creamer, she's awake, and that's not all. She's heard every word you've said to me.

CREAMER.

O, Lord!

BERTHA.

And heard you kiss me.

CREAMER.

But you encouraged me, Bertha.

BERTHA.

Encouraged you sir, no sir.

CREAMER.

Didn't you say you loved me?

BERTHA.

Never, sir.

CREAMER.

Didn't you say you were jealous?

BERTHA.

It wasn't you I loved and was jealous of.

CREAMER.

Not me? Who then?

BERTHA.

It was the lobster, — ha, ha, ha!

CREAMER.

(*Aside.*) Creamer be calm, be very calm; don't show how you are staggered by being thrown over by a lobster, — a two-shilling lobster; d — n that lobster.

BERTHA.

I love lobster.

CREAMER.

So did the widow.

BERTHA.

Widow! What widow?

CREAMER.

Widow; who said anything about a widow?

BERTHA.

You did.

CREAMER.

Bertha, you wrong me.

BERTHA.

You distinctly said, "so does the widow."

CREAMER.

Hush, there's a stir in my wife's room, — hush. There is a widow, Bertha, but for heaven's sake keep quiet.

BERTHA.

O, master! master!

CREAMER.

(*Going to his wife's door*, R.2E.) Hush! (*Looking in key-hole.*) Eh! What do I see? A gaily dressed young cavalier in my wife's room. Can I believe my eyes? (*Opens door, brings out* MRS. CREAMER *by the ear.*) Come out here, sir, come out here. Now, sir, look me in the face if you dare. (*Looking at* MRS. CREAMER.) My wife! The devil!

BERTHA.

(*Aside.*) O, Lord! it's all up!

CREAMER.

Well, madam, this is very pretty, very proper, isn't it? And now, madam, what means this dress?

BERTHA.

(*Aside, fidgeting about.*) What shall I do? What shall I say?

CREAMER.

O, you're dumb, are you?

BERTHA.

Master, master! You see, — you see she didn't mean any harm. She got all ready to go to the masked ball, — it was very naughty I know, — and before she went, she sent me for a bit of cold chicken; she heard you coming, so she ran in her room, and you saw me when I was a fetching her the cold chicken, how flurried I was, and how I kept you from where she was hiding.

CREAMER.

My wife going to the masked ball, and alone?

BERTHA.

O no, sir, not alone. My Joseph was going to the door of the theatre with her. (JOSEPH *comes in* C. *door. Seeing him.*) You *was* going with missus, wasn't you, Joe? (*Nodding to him.*)

JOSEPH.

Why, bless you, of course I was, sir. Didn't I try to do the thing up brown, too? Dress-coat and gossamer, first-class.

CREAMER.

O, this is too much, too much. Madam! (*To* Mrs. C.) I'll have nothing more to say to you. No, madam, I'll get divorced.

BERTHA.

(*Going to* Mr. CREAMER.) No you won't, master.

CREAMER.

Won't! Who says I won't? Who's to hinder?

BERTHA.

Me (*loud whisper*) and the widow.

CREAMER.

Hush! I forgot the widow.

BERTHA.

You'll forgive missus, master. You know she didn't go. If she'd been and gone, 'twould have been awful, I admit. Surely there's no harm in merely getting ready.

CREAMER.

But, Bertha, you forget; she meant to go. That's what's bad.

BERTHA.

Any worse than the widow scrape?

CREAMER.

Hush! Widow scrape? What widow scrape? Bertha, there was no widow scrape; but hush! Say no more: all shall be forgiven. (*To* Mrs. CREAMER.) Malinda, my love, you shall be

forgiven. The past is a dream, bordering on a night-mare, I admit, but only a dream. You look so charming in tights, with the other brilliant fixings, that I am sure if I had looked at your elegant figure but a second time, I could not have been angry; I believe I should even have forgiven you had I seen you actually coming from the ball. (*Embraces her.*) To think I ran away from this. O, Creamer!

JOSEPH.

(*To* BERTHA.) So he don't know she has been.

BERTHA.

Lord bless you, no.

JOSEPH.

That's rich, ha, ha, ha!

BERTHA.

I'll make them pay me for my trouble. I've the widow over him, and the ball over her. It's a good thing to have the upper hand of your master and missus.

CREAMER.

Excuse me, my darling, there's a moral to say.
(*Coming down. To audience.*)
Should your wives go a larking while you are away,

BERTHA.

Your house-maids will help 'em, the secret they'll keep,

CREAMER.

But don't be bamboozled with "She's Fast Asleep."

CURTAIN.

Mrs. Creamer. *Mr. Creamer.* *Bertha.* *Joseph.*

R. C. L.

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